



United States Department of Agriculture

A new research strategy for sustainable recreation and tourism

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Sustainable Tourism & Outdoor Recreation Conference



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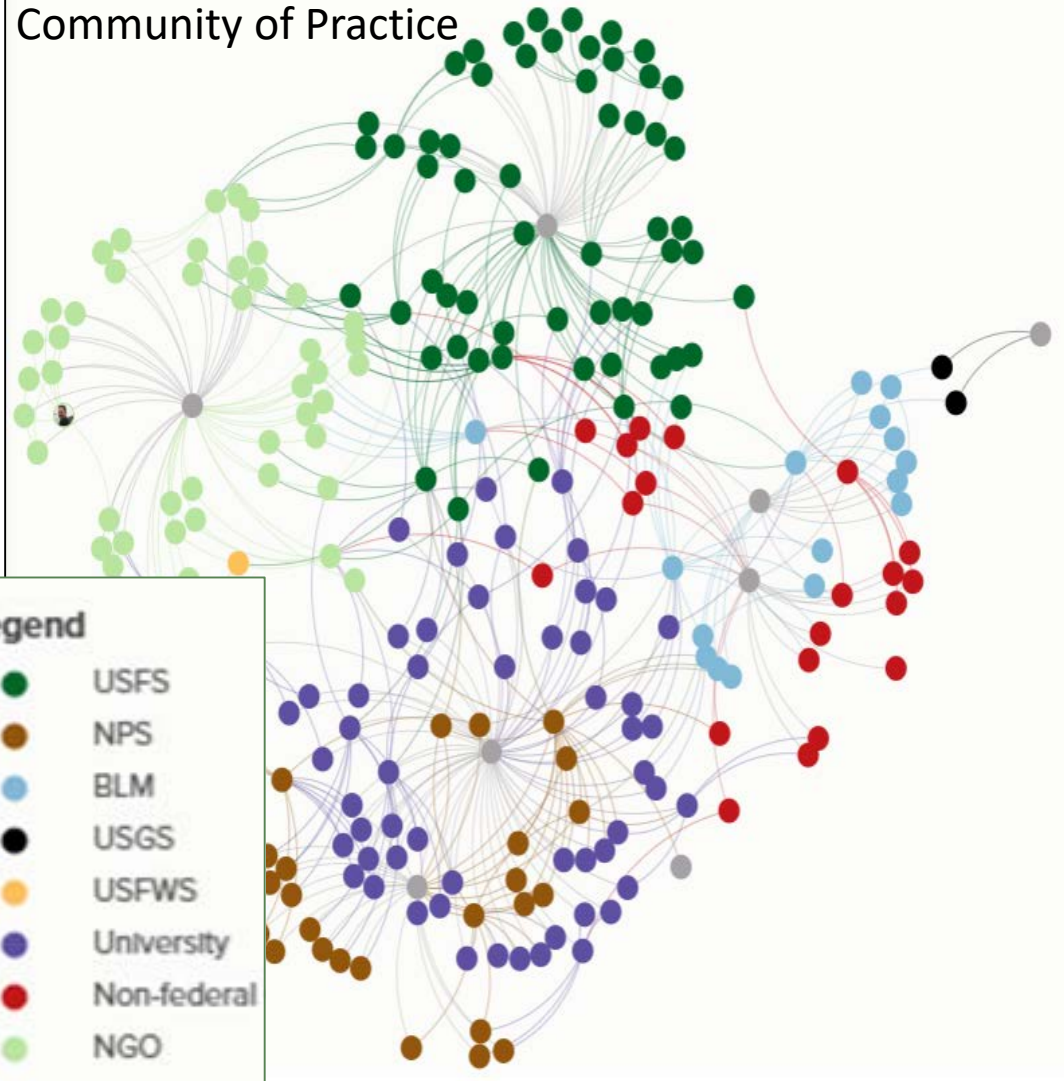
Rationale

- Disconnections between research and management
- Declining agency capacity
- Increasing visitation at popular sites
- More cultural diversity among visitors
- Increasing deferred maintenance and infrastructure issues
- Climate change
- Etc.



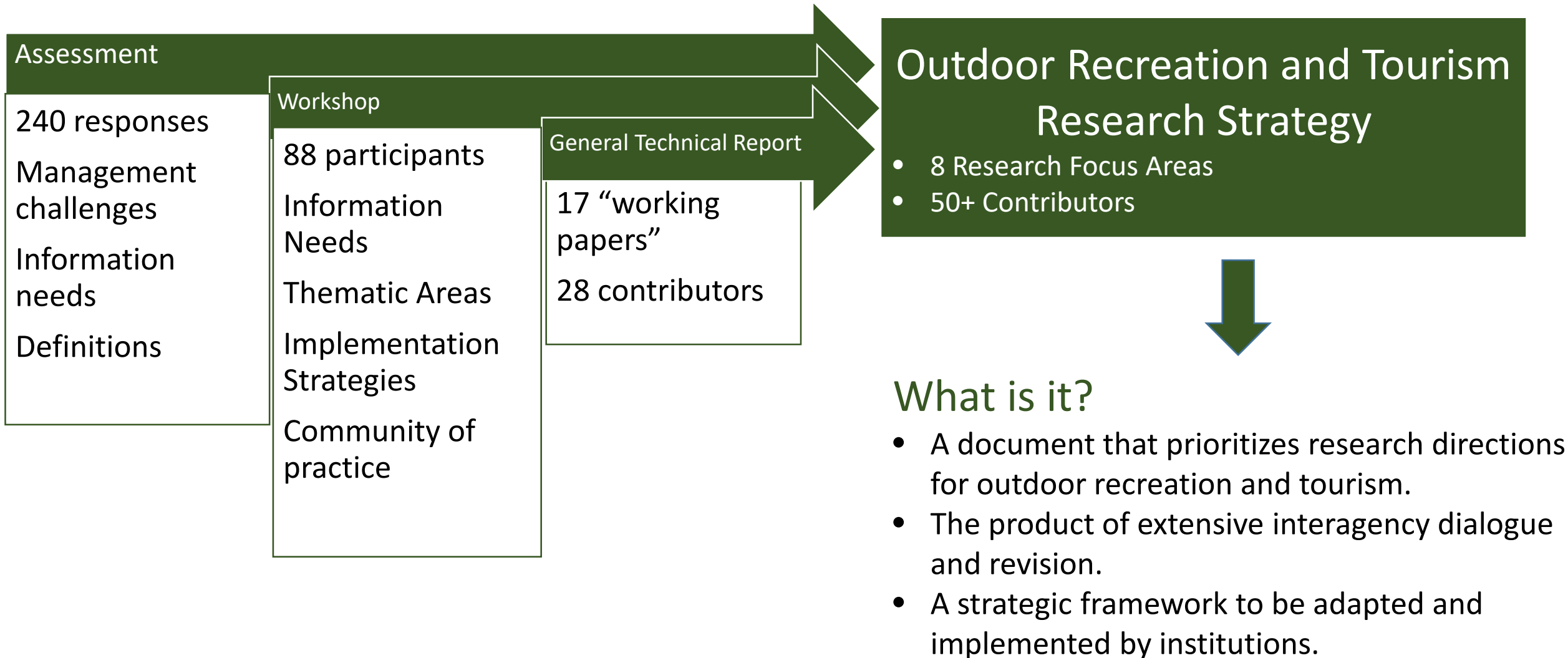
Igniting the Science of Outdoor Recreation (ISOR)

Community of Practice



Coordinating Team

Process



What is a Research Focus Area?

- Identifies and guides national recreation and tourism research priorities
- Developed through:
 - Sustainable recreation and tourism assessment
 - Golden workshop
 - Monthly coordination calls
 - 8 writing leads and teams
 - Review and revision process



Research Focus Areas

1. Integrated social-ecological planning frameworks
2. Recreation-ecology interactions
3. New drivers of demand for recreation ★
4. Measuring and monitoring visitor use ★
5. Connections between people and nature ★
6. Place and culture in land management
7. Health and well-being ★
8. Protected areas in the tourism economy ★



Assessing new drivers and characteristics of demand for outdoor experiences

Land managers need better information about changing recreational use patterns, so that they can to adaptively manage recreation resources and access for a diverse public.

This RFA aims to:

- Understand drivers of demand for outdoor recreation experiences, and anticipate new patterns of recreation participation.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Analyze how regulatory and management approaches might respond to visitation changes.
- Examine how outdoor landscapes are imagined, commoditized, and consumed in the media.
- Model how social media and crowdsourcing apps influence visitation patterns.

Measuring, monitoring and forecasting visitor use

Managers lack visitation data necessary for understanding long- and short-term recreation trends, as well as projected changes.

This RFA aims to:

- Develop methods for collecting accurate and reliable visitation data that can be integrated across agency jurisdictions and is available at relevant spatial and temporal scales.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Develop methods that measure visitation at relevant spatial and temporal scales.
- Characterize relationships among visitor volumes and experience, and ecological processes.
- Synthesize visitation monitoring protocols, best practices, and database design.

Exploring connections among people, nature, and public lands

Public land visitors have wide-ranging recreation behaviors, preferences, motivations, and different meanings they attach to places and activities.

This RFA aims to:

- Understand, encourage, and manage for diverse uses of public lands.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Examine institutional and cultural barriers that limit participation in recreation activities.
- Analyze how visitors create meanings from outdoor experiences, places, and activities.
- Assess tools that promote learning about different groups' desired outdoor experiences.

Investigating the health and wellbeing benefits of outdoor experiences

The benefits of outdoor experiences need to be better understood so that managers can design programs, facilities, and spaces that maximize benefits for diverse visitors.

This RFA aims to:

- Improve understanding of the health and well-being benefits of nature-based outdoor experiences.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Assess the health benefits conferred by outdoor experiences, and their causal mechanisms.
- Evaluate programs run collaboratively by health providers and land managers.
- Synthesize best practices for health-oriented outdoor recreation programs and spaces.

Understanding tourism economies and systems for protected area planning

Land management agencies don't view themselves as tourism providers and don't engage with regional or local tourism entities.

This RFA aims to:

- Understand and assess sustainable tourism as a local and regional development strategy in relation to public lands.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Analyze emerging tourism niches and how they relate to visitor demand on public lands.
- Identify key public lands in regional tourism systems through network analyses and systems mapping.
- Develop metrics for assessing and monitoring the sustainability of tourism on public lands.

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1. Integrated social-ecological planning frameworks
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Cross-Cutting Topics



- Disciplinary disconnections
- Human connections with nature beyond leisure
- Context-driven management
- Working across multiple scales
- Science-management barriers

Join us!

- What's missing?
- What's next?
 - Research Strategy review and publication
 - GTR forthcoming
 - Journal special issues
 - Community of practice
 - 2020 symposium
 - Working groups and workshops



Igniting the Science of Outdoor Recreation

Bridging management and research to understand outdoor experiences and human connections with natural and cultural heritage



An integrated team of managers, practitioners, and researchers has formed to find ways to bolster our collective research capacity and improve alignment around priority research needs for outdoor recreation and nature-based experiences. We work across many agencies, universities, and community-based organizations to identify the most important areas for future investment to enhance the quality and opportunity for people to connect with nature on our public lands.



Working Teams

Research Strategy & Agenda Team – Work with a group of managers and researchers to develop a research strategy and proposed agenda for outdoor recreation. We are specifically looking for people to work on different sections of the research agenda, including elaborating on research needs for each [research focus area](#). Each team will summarize management challenges, develop a rationale, identify specific information needs, indicate new technologies, data needs, knowledge sharing strategies, potential partnerships, and opportunities for integration, and consider policy implications.

Science Co-Production Team – A compendium of 18 brief working papers is being published as a general technical report. We are also seeking contributions for a special journal issue on recreation research.



Integrating outdoor recreation planning into a social-ecological planning framework

Traditional public land management is highly segregated by disciplinary programs, and recreation is often a secondary consideration.

This RFA aims to:

- Advance knowledge and practice for integrating multiple uses and resources into planning processes.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Understand barriers to integration of land management planning through social-ecological systems approaches.
- Integrate socio-economic data into established biophysical and ecological models and tools.
- Understand how interdisciplinary planning processes function.

Examining recreation-ecology interactions at multiple scales

Outdoor recreationists are part of protected area ecosystems. A deeper understanding is needed of human-environment interactions in the context of outdoor recreation and tourism.

This RFA aims to:

- Achieve a better understanding of recreationists' and tourists' interactions with the environment at multiple spatial and temporal scales, in the context of broad environmental change.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Develop and apply a framework for understanding human-wildlife interactions.
- Model the effect of recreation on the biophysical environment on multiple scales.
- Better understand how visitors respond or adapt to environmental changes by substituting locations, timing, activities.

Integrating culture and place into land management and outdoor recreation experiences

Cultural resources are often managed separately from outdoor recreation and natural resources, resulting in missed connections for visitors experiences in cultural landscapes.

This RFA aims to:

- Assess opportunities to integrate cultural resources with outdoor recreation and natural resource management programs.

Research topics to address management needs:

- Assess models for integrating natural and cultural resource management.
- Develop management integration tools to forge heritage connections on public lands.
- Formulate best preservation and management practices for heritage sites, landscapes, and activities as they relate to outdoor recreation.